

*The Touvet castle stands on the frontier between the ancient Kingdom of Savoy and the Duchy of Dauphiné. It is built 1000 feet up on the flank of the Chartreuse hills: it dominates the valley of the Isère river, opposite the snow covered Belledonne mountain range.*

## CASTLE

### Early history...

In the Middle Ages, le Touvet Castle was a stronghold commanding the valley. In 1528, it became the property of Guigues Guiffrey; who was one of Chevalier Bayard's companions-in-arms. Since that time, the castle has remained in the same family, handed down through the generations, to the Monteynard, the Marcieu and in modern times the Quinsonas. The remains of the medieval castle can be seen in the two rampart walls, the five towers and the water-filled moat to the north and to the west.

### 18th Century transformations

The castle and the grounds, as we see them today, incorporate the main features of the renovation work, which was carried out around 1750 by Count Pierre de Marcieu. A man of wide learning and great culture, he was appointed Louis XV's Lieutenant General and Commander in Chief in Dauphine, and began modernising the castle estate.

The fortified main building was enlarged, and transformed into a delightful country residence. The interior decoration is a reflection of the way of life which was led by the local nobility: the collections of furniture and painting are typical of artistic richness of the period. The Count's life was one of the wealthy ease, and the castle's main rooms hosted many receptions.

## GARDEN

### A creation inspired by the Count Pierre de Marcieu.

With a view to enhancing the castle by surrounding it with a remarkable garden estate, the Count drew up a master plan, whereby a man-made stepped cascade flowed majestically down from the heights above the castle.

The castle archives house the plans, account records, inventories and botanical catalogues which amply illustrate the extent of the work carried out between 1752 end 1762. The disciplines of architecture, hydraulics and horticulture enhance this grandiose natural site.

### An 18th Century Formal Garden.

The stepped cascade is surrounded by the gardens. It was designed by Sire Pottin, who was a master craftsman famous for the garden planning, and realised in 1759 by Master mason Venture. The cascade is fed by a mountain torrent, and a large number of natural springs; it has retained the original hydraulic network. The water is gravity fed-from the upper garden level down to the moats- via an intricate and wide spread network of stone-built underground channels.

The stepped cascade runs between six embroidered boxwood beds and -lower down- in more bucolic settings: woodland, orchards and flowering meadows... The garden arrangement is much like that of formal Italian gardens: an harmonious meeting of waterscapes, man-made views and the grander natural vista of panorama beyond.

### 20th Century restoration

In the 19th Century, the gardens outgrew their original rigorous symmetry, and softened into the more romantic line of English garden. The two huge plane trees were planted in this period.

In 1964, the castle and grounds were officially inscribed in the French National Historical Monuments register.

1975 saw the completion of the varnished tile restoration work on the castle roof, and the beginning of the restoration work on the gardens.

The site was opened to visitors in 1985, regular work could then be done on the moat and water cascade stonework.

The renovation work on the gardens came to an end in 1999, with the creation of eight ornamental ponds, and the restoration of the boxwood borders round the embroidered beds, just as shown on the original 18th Century plans.

### Today

Our main concern is the upkeep of the gardens, which need constant attention. The wood lined walks and the box borders need pruning and trimming twice a year; the lawns and the grassed walk ways must be mown; hand weeding carried out; just as the regular scouring and cleaning of the pools, and the ornamental basins...

The protection of this living and fragile heritage is our constant priority, and we do our best to maintain it with all due respect to its natural environment.



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# JARDINS & CHATEAU DU TOUVET

## Welcome

Welcome to Le Touvet Castle. You are invited to discover its remarkable gardens. They were designed and laid out in 1750, and are a living testimony to 18th Century Garden Art.

This leaflet gives a sketch plan of the Castle site, and it will help you find your way round the grounds. It also contains notes on the garden- their original design and the transformation work over the centuries.

In 2004, the French Ministry of Culture gave Le Touvet its official "Outstanding Gardens" award, in recognition of their historical, architectural and landscaped richness.

Your presence here today is a real encouragement for us, and helps us pay all the work needed to maintain and to preserve this heritage. For this, our warm thanks. Enjoy your visit.

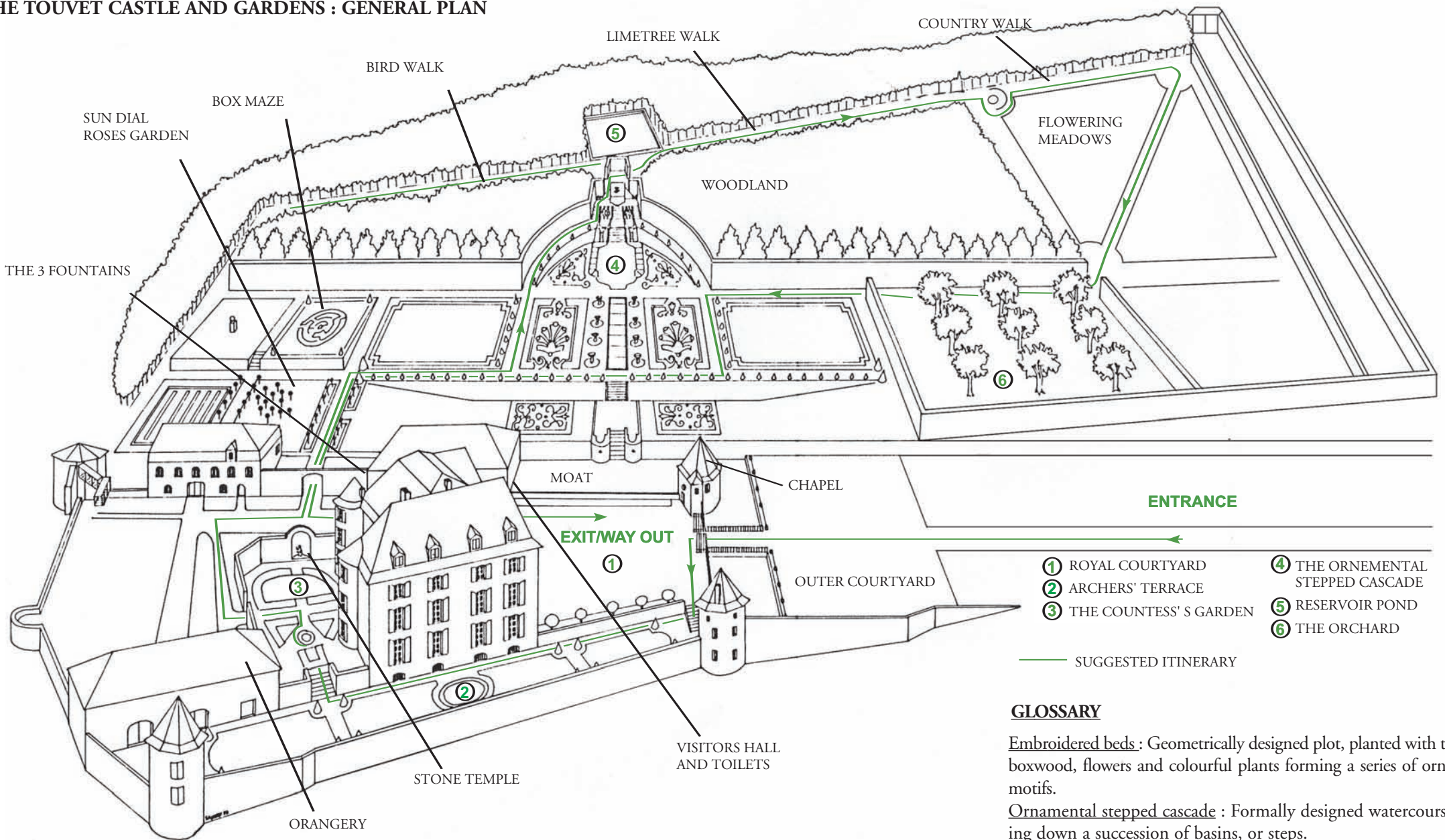
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# THE TOUVET CASTLE AND GARDENS : GENERAL PLAN



- ① ROYAL COURTYARD
- ② ARCHERS' TERRACE
- ③ THE COUNTESS' S GARDEN
- ④ THE ORNAMENTAL STEPPED CASCADE
- ⑤ RESERVOIR POND
- ⑥ THE ORCHARD

— SUGGESTED ITINERARY

## GLOSSARY

**Embroidered beds :** Geometrically designed plot, planted with trimmed boxwood, flowers and colourful plants forming a series of ornamental motifs.



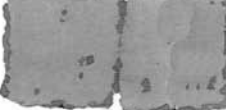

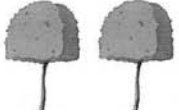
**Ornamental stepped cascade :** Formally designed watercourse, flowing down a succession of basins, or steps.

**Three lined walks :** Alleyway lined with thick hornbeam hedges, the hornbeam being easily trimmed to shape.

**Mirror :** A geometrically shaped pond or basin, used in formal French gardens, and so designed that the surface of the waters reflects the colour and light of the sky.

**Orangery :** An unheated outhouse where orange trees, growing in tubs, are stored during winter months.

TOPIARY/ THE ART OF TRIMMING SHRUBS TO AN ORNAMENTAL SHAPE

				
BUXUS SEMPERVIRENS BOXWOOD		CARPINUS BETULUS HORNBEAM	TAXUS BACCATA YEWE	LONICERA LILAC